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M. F. B. 440. IN REPLY PLEASE QUOTE

MILITIA AND DEFENCE.

NO._____

July 5th 1918

The President,
The University of Toronto.

Dear Mr. President,

As "A" Company, 1st Canadian Tank Battalion has now completed the first stage of its journey towards France, and as it is also about the end of a month, I feel it is opportune to let you have some account of our activities since you saw us in Ottawa.

From May 23rd, the date on which you were last with the Company, until June 3rd, the date of our leaving, the ordinary nature of early training was followed, viz:- physical training, squad and section drill, route marches and a few lectures; athletics also had their share of attention and "A" Company was represented in the Victoria Day Sports at Ottawa by Pte. Martin--2nd place 100 yds. open; Pte. Smiley--3rd place 1/2 mile open final; Cpl, Jamieson, Pte. Maynard, Pte. Cronin, Cpl. Malloy were others who entered. On May 25th Battalion sports were held and "A" Company came in last on points, Ptes. Feasby and Martin were the chief scorers. An intersection Indoor Baseball series was also played off, No. 4 Section--Capt. Forgie finally winning. "A" Company also beat "B" Company at Basket Ball.

The Battalion left Ottawa on June 3rd in two trains at 7:00 A.M. and 7:30 A.M. They marched from the barracks to the station in good style and were seen off on time without a hitch by a considerable number of friends.

Both trains reached Montreal between 11 and 12 o'clock and after some delay the Battalion went aboard H.M.T. Cassandra (Donaldson Line--8500 tons). There was some confusion and delay about meals on this day and as the men went aboard alphabetically the section and crew organization was temporarily broken up. This was all remedied the next day and the messing proved unexpectedly good.

"A" Company was located on the lower forward troop-deck for messing and sleeping and the Battalion used the forward well deck by day, sharing on alternate days the promenade deck with the C.O.R. drafts from the aft well deck.

We left Montreal about 5:30 P.M. on Monday and reached Halifax about 1:00 P.M. on Friday, June 7th. The intervening days saw a regular routine established, viz:- chiefly physical training in the earlier part of the morning for the men, who took it in succession owing to the limitations of deck room.

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The officers had physical training at 10:30 A.M. and there was daily boat drill for all on board. After the first practice the company could all be at stations in two minutes from the time of the alarm.

Boxing was a popular sport and sleeping ran it a close second.

In Halifax we anchored outside the narrows and found ourselves one of a constantly increasing fleet of vessels and in company with these we pulled out about 5:00 P.M. on Sunday, June 9th, into a stiff wind and a rising swell. The troop-decks were rather uncomfortable that night and a number of the men were sick, but by Monday the weather had become ideal and there was no further sea-sickness.

The passage itself was not marked by any special incidents and the weather was almost uniformly warm and the sea calm. The messing was excellent and the only serious discomfort was the necessity of keeping all portholes closed at night, which made the 'tween decks very warm.

The "Cassandra" had not carried troops since the first contingent and as a result her fittings, hammocks, plates, dixies and so on were brand new, and this materially helped to make the journey tolerable.

By way of interest a signalling class for the officers was started under Capt. J.K.Cronyn and Lieut. A.F. Coventry took one for the N.C.O's. Later also Sgt. Unwin took charge of a class of men. This idea was rapidly followed by the other companies.

A Battalion boxing tournament was also started but up to this time has not yet been finished and the results will be given in the next letter.

We arrived at Tilbury on the morning of June 21st and immediately after breakfast about 8:30 A.M. began debarkation by tender. The first train got away about 9:30 A.M. and reached Frensham, Surrey, via the northern outskirts of London, about 2:00 P.M. A three mile march, which hit rather hard after the lazy spell on the boat, brought the Unit to Frensham Pond Camp where we are quarantined for 28 days to eliminate the measles and mumps which appeared during the ocean trip.

The first few days we spent in inspections of various kinds, medical, dental, clothing and an inspection by the G.O.C. area, who appeared to be favorably impressed.

Last Tuesday the whole of the rank and file were taken over

by the Bexhill instructors attached to the Camp, and although the work at first hit some men rather hard, soft as all were from the boat, they are now enjoying it. Their instructors recognize that they are unusually good material and have adapted their methods to the case as far as circumstances allow. The Officers are carrying on special courses.

On Tuesday, June 25th, the Battalion held sports in preparation for Camp Sports on Dominion Day. "A" Company obtained first place with a considerable lead in points.

On Dominion Day the Battalion took in the Camp Sports 92 points out of a possible 160 and of the 92 "A" Company won 45.

The Company is in good spirits and attacking its work with vigour, feeling glad that at least the first stage of its journey to France has been completed.

I am sending this letter to Canada by an Officer who is returning and I trust that it will reach you allright.

I must ask you not to publish it or any subsequent letters as we are not sticking strictly to the ruling of the Censor.

I wish to take this opportunity on behalf of the Company of expressing my thanks to you for the interest you have taken in the Company and beg to remain,

Yours very sincerely,

D. Mavor,

Major,
O.C. "A" Company.